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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence

25 April 1975

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam
(As of 1600 EDST)
No. 24

New Government in Prospect

1. South Vietnam's President Huong has scheduled a speech for 10 tomorrow morning (10 tonight, Washington time) to the National Assembly where he is expected to turn the government over to General Duong Van "Big" Minh. Huong's decision apparently has followed considerable pressure by influential Vietnamese of all political persuasions.

2. The Minh government's raison d'etre will be promptly to seek and accept whatever terms the Communists are willing to offer. Buddhist leader Thich Tri Quang says that Minh's return to power essentially is only to "hoist the white flag." It is no longer possible to do more than "save the furniture."

3. To emphasize this point, Minh already has tentatively selected a government of surrender featuring leaders of South Vietnam's previously vocal opposition movements. Senator Nguyen Van Huyen, a moderate southern Catholic and outspoken Thieu opponent, has been designated vice-president in charge of negotiations. Huyen's appointment is obviously designed to reassure Catholics and conservatives and encourage their support. Senator Vu Van Mau, representing the militant An Quang Buddhists, will serve as prime minister and foreign minister concurrently.

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In an obvious gesture of accommodation to the Communists, Madame Ngo Ba Thanh -- an American-educated lawyer and longtime leftist gadfly who has been involved for years in various anti-government organizations -- is to become minister of justice.

4. The Viet Cong's Provisional Revolutionary Government, through its foreign minister Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, has indicated that a government headed by Minh would be one with which it could consider negotiations. Moreover, Minh's selection of individuals for his new government complies with a PRG demand that the new Saigon administration must represent a clean break from the former regime and include no one who was sympathetic to former President Thieu. The Communists also probably feel that Minh would accept their other demands that all US military support and personnel be withdrawn.

5. In their statement yesterday, the PRG used a formulation that at least suggested that the Communists might allow a residual US diplomatic presence to continue in Saigon by stating that any new government must demand the immediate withdrawal of all American military and intelligence personnel. This appears to represent a refinement of earlier statements that the Communists viewed all American civilians in South Vietnam as "disguised" military advisers and that all these must also be included in the total withdrawal.

6. The Communists also demanded that the new government must demonstrate its sincerity "through realistic actions, not through pledges." This would suggest that the Communists might be willing to negotiate a cease-fire if their terms are met completely, but that the new government should not delude itself into thinking it should try first to rally popular support for a defense of its remaining territory, and then to offer to negotiate.

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Military Action

7. The Communists are maintaining pressure on Saigon's outer defenses with small-scale attacks along the main approaches west and north of the city.

8. South Vietnamese bases and outposts west of Saigon are prime targets, as the Communists continue to secure avenues of attack towards the capital, and heavy shellings were directed at a number of government positions there. The regional commander, General Toan, reported that virtually all of the South Vietnamese artillery at two major government positions was destroyed by the shellings. The Bien Hoa airbase and other targets northeast of Saigon are also being shelled regularly, and the Communists are striking new targets including South Vietnamese training camps on the city's outskirts.

9. Pressure is increasing on Vung Tau. One regiment of the North Vietnamese 325th Division with its supporting armor is moving down Route 2, just outside the Phuoc Tuy Province capital of Ba Ria. This force could move against Ba Ria at any time, but it could encounter some difficulty continuing down the only road along the narrow peninsula connecting with Vung Tau some 12 miles further southwest.

10. The delta remains relatively quiet. Most Communist action was centered in Dinh Tuong and Chong Thien provinces while South Vietnamese spoiling operations, including air and artillery strikes, are disrupting Communist deployments closer to My Tho and Can Tho cities.

Communist Attack Plans

11. Despite the relatively low level of combat on the battlefronts around Saigon, there has been no letup in indications of Communist planning for increased fighting which could lead to direct assaults on Saigon itself.

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